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RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 0680  
RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA 1113  
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RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 3438  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0876  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000074

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AF FOR DAS T. WOODS  
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NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR C. COURVILLE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/24/2016  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [ZI](#)  
SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYERS LATEST GOZ TARGET

REF: A. KHARTOUM 166 (NOTAL)

[1](#)B. STATE 8496

Classified By: Charge d'affaires, a.i., Eric T. Schultz, for reasons 1.  
5 b/d

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Summary  
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[1](#)1. (C) The GOZ has stepped up its pressure against the prominent local NGO Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR). Police attempted to arrest the NGO,s Executive Director and reportedly are still searching for him and another lawyer involved with the independent radio station Voice of the People (VOP). ZLHR has long been a thorn in the GOZ,s side. Its most recent major effort was in pushing for the African Commission on Human and People,s Rights resolution condemning the GOZ. The increased pressure is likely a result of the NGO,s efforts. End summary.

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Manhunt for ZLHR Lawyers  
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[1](#)2. (C) On January 23, Otto Saki from Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR) told poloff that on January 21, police had visited the home of ZLHR Executive Director Arnold Tsunga in order to arrest him as a trustee of Voice of the People. Voice of the People is an independent radio station broadcast from outside the country. In December, police raided its Zimbabwe offices and subsequently arrested its director, John Masuku, who was charged with illegally operating a radio station. When police did not find Tsunga at home, they arrested a ZLHR driver and a caretaker at his home for obstructing justice. Police had said they would hold the staff until Tsunga turned himself in. However, according to a January 22 ZLHR press release, Tsunga's staff had been released without charges when ZLHR lawyers intervened.

13. (C) Saki said that, as of early on January 23, Tsunga,s lawyers were negotiating with the Attorney General,s office for Tsunga to turn himself in. Because they feared a lengthy detention if he turned himself in to police, they were trying to arrange an immediate court appearance instead. Police had also visited the home of another VOP trustee, Nhlanhla Ngwenya, who was also absent from home when the police arrived. ZLHR also reported that police had indicated they would soon arrest another ZLHR lawyer, Tafadzwa Mugabe, who works in ZLHR,s public interest litigation unit and has been representing VOP, for failing to reveal the whereabouts of the station,s trustees.

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A Thorn in the GOZ,s Side  
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14. (SBU) ZLHR is one of the leading NGOs in raising awareness of and combating human rights abuses in Zimbabwe. Domestically, ZLHR provides legal support to human rights activists who have been detained, arrested, or abused by police or other government agents. The organization conducts human rights education workshops around the country. ZLHR also pursues legal cases against the OZ for human rights abuses, both in the domesticcourts and internationally when domestic optionshave been exhausted. For example, ZLHR pursued several cases against the government for itsactions n Operation Restore Order.

15. (C) ZLR widely publicizes the regime,s human rights vilations, both domestically and in regional and international fora. ZLHR lawyers were instrumental i

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crafting and lobbying for the African Commission on Human and People,s Rights (ACHPR) resolution condemning the GOZ,s human rights abuses. Most recently, a ZLHR lawyer was participating in the civil society meetings held in Sudan in the run-up to the AU meeting (ref A). On January 19, before his attempted arrest, Tsunga had told poloff that as a result of the ACHPR resolution, ZLHR was bracing for increased government harassment.

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Comment  
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16. (C) The GOZ had previously refrained from direct attacks on ZLHR, its staff, or its members. It is likely that ZLHR,s involvement in VOP and with the ACHR resolution has raised their profile enough to make them a target, joining other leading civil society organizations, such as the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions and the National Constitutional Assembly. The regime,s assault on civil society seems likely to continue, and perhaps even intensify, as the economy continues its meltdown and the regime grows ever more desperate.  
DELL